

I worry that the broadcast flag will mean that I shall no longer be able to modify cheap, commodity television parts to do science with them.

In graduate school, I modified a radio modem to measure lightning channel cooling rates. I realize that the proposed mandate applies only to digital television, not to radio modems, but if it had applied to modems, I would not have been able to afford to do the research I did.

The early lightning mappers I studied in graduate school were built with VHF TV electronics, because they were available at low cost. The systems built then would still be legal, because they used only analog parts, with no digital control. But a modern version of those systems could no longer be built. These days, someone trying to do the same thing would want to use commodity digital parts if available, and I believe the proposed regulation will prevent us from getting these parts in any form we can easily modify for our own purposes.

My business partner and I discussed only a few months ago possibly building the next version of our lightning detector using television hardware, because components are cheap at television frequencies. With the restrictions you propose, I shall have a much harder time reusing TV hardware for any purpose other than TV, and so I shall probably be forced to use more expensive general purpose signal processors.

The fact that TV electronics are produced in great numbers makes them inexpensive. I think the proposed regulation is going to make it harder for me and for people like me to use those parts for anything other than TV. This may be fair (we didn't pay for the engineering that reduced the cost of these parts), but it is not efficient.

Simple parts are good, because they can be reused in ways their makers never imagined. The proposed regulation will make some commodity parts less simple.

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Stan